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Z. E. DEN LUTT. GENERAAL

B. D. H. CHASSÉ.

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MEMOIR OF GENERAL CHASSÉ.



ALTHOUGH not among the warriors who have filled the world with their renown, the name of this distinguished foreign officer claims a place here by a double title—first, on the general public ground that he is now in command of a fortress, upon which the eyes of the nations are intent; and secondly, that he is of the race of those from whom spring the genuine *Knickerbackers*.

The engraving which accompanies this memoir, presents faithfully the lineaments of this veteran soldier. It is executed from an engraving recently received from Holland, and does more than justice to the original. In the compressed mouth, and resolute brow, and air of decision which this portrait exhibits, the daring character and well proved heroism of the man whose life, even unto old age, has been spent amid the din and perils of battle, speak to every eye.

According to a brief notice we find of him in the *Biographie des Contemporains*—a record, we may say in passing, of as high talents and attainments in every department of knowledge or of art, of as noble characters, and of as daring achievements, as the annals of the world can shew—**DAVID HENRY CHASSE** was born on the 18th March, 1765, at Thiel, in Guelderland, and at ten years of age, with hereditary taste, (his father being a military officer) he entered as a cadet into the service of the United Provinces. He obtained in 1781 the rank of lieutenant, and in 1787 that of captain. At this period the disputes, which had long agitated the United Provinces, broke out into open and violent conflicts. The republican

party, opposed to the establishment of an hereditary Stadtholdership in the house of Orange, and rendered more ardent in the general cause of freedom, by the success with which these United States had then recently concluded their struggle for independence, proceeded to extremes, and among other measures, a band of the more violent patriots arrested the wife of the Stadtholder, who was sister to the king of Prussia. She immediately besought the aid of her brother, and forthwith a Prussian army of 25,000 men appeared, to avenge the insult and vindicate the cause of the Stadtholder William V. Young Chassé, then only twenty-two years old, and who, with the natural enthusiasm of youth, had embraced the cause of the patriots, was fired with new zeal at the aspect of foreign mercenaries brought into his own native land, to impose upon it by force a government it rejected, and was foremost in the ranks to combat them. But the resistance of the patriots was unskilfully conducted and unsuccessful; and when, in September, 1787, Amsterdam fell into the hands of the Prussians, and the patriot cause was finally lost, Chassé, with others, went into voluntary exile. Soon again, however, lured by the same idol, Liberty, which now was arousing the people of France from the despotism of ages, he entered into the French armies, and so distinguished himself by his gallantry, that in 1793, he had attained the rank of lieutenant-colonel. In 1794, he was attached to the army under *Pichegru*, and made the memorable campaign of 1794-5, when the water defences of Holland, which under ordinary circumstances render her almost impregnable, became the sources of her weakness; and the floods which from her dikes she poured forth over smiling fields and villages, in order that the foot of the invader might be cut from her soil, were bridged over with solid ice, and presented the unwonted and unwelcome spectacle of embattled armies, with their horses and their artillery borne into the very heart of the land, by a path made with no human hands. The arms and the opinions of republican France found ready acceptance among the patriots of Holland, and by their aid, and with their concurrence, the Batavian republic was formed in May, 1795. They too soon found that a republic established by the arms and maintained by the presence of a foreign soldiery, was a mockery of their fairest hopes; and it cannot be doubted, that the delusion which had blinded Chassé to the crime—for crime since the days of *Coriolanus* to those of *Moreau* it has been, and ever should be, deemed—of bearing arms with foreigners

against his native land, was early and bitterly repented. He, whose youthful patriotism had been kindled to a loftier glow, by the introduction into his country of a Prussian army, to avenge and defend the cause of the Stadtholder, could not, in maturer years, and when the first impulse and ebullition of the high excitement of the times had passed, but feel that he had greatly erred. His career since that period has, however, been wholly with Dutch troops and worthy of the brightest days of that valiant people, who in their early history were styled by Tacitus, "the friends rather than the allies of the Romans," and whose warlike qualities were so remarkable, as to draw from the same historian this description of the nation—"unvexed by tribute, free from all taxes, they (the Batavians) are, as it were, set apart for the demands of battle, and like arms reserved alone for war." In the campaign of 1796, he was attached to the army under the command of the Dutch General, Daendels. In 1799, the English having made a descent upon the coast of Holland, General Chassé displayed great military talent at the head of the Dutch corps, who fought several hours against a larger body of English troops. This campaign having terminated, he quitted the country for Germany. He was at the siege of Wurtzburg, took a battery from the Austrians, and four hundred prisoners, on the 27th of December, 1800. In the years 1805 and 1806, he served with distinction in the war against Prussia, under the command of the Dutch General Dumoreau. But, above all, it was in the Spanish war that General Chassé was most distinguished.

Having been created a major-general and appointed to the command of a Dutch division, he led them wherever there was danger and glory. Always in advance himself, always decisive, and distinguished especially for the frequency and the success of the charges he led, he obtained from his own corps and in the army, the significant appellation of the weapon he so freely resorted to; and as Murat, from the number and brilliancy of his cavalry charges, was called *the Saberer*, and Junot, from the impetuosity of his attacks, was distinguished as *the Grenadier*, General Chassé came to be known and dreaded as *the Bayonet-chief*. For six years of this murderous Spanish war, he was always in the hottest of its battles, and in all, the simple and glorious praises of his soldiers, the witnesses of his exploits and the companions of his dangers, accompanied him. At Talavera, Durango, Missa d'Abord, and parti-

cularly at Ocana, where the Dutch troops covered themselves with glory, he was conspicuous; and when finally the broken remnants of the many gallant armies, which the insatiate ambition of Napoleon had poured into Spain, to be sacrificed piece-meal to the great revenge of a wronged and outraged nation, were fast retreating under the auspices of Marshal Soult, before the better fortune and better cause of a combined English and Spanish force, led by the Duke of Wellington, the valor and the daring of General Chassé were signally displayed at *Col de Maja*, a pass in the Pyrenees. In this pass the corps d'armée commanded by Count d'Erlon, hemmed in and pressed by superior numbers, was relieved by the *bayonets* of the Dutch division led on by General Chassé, and extricated from its difficulties. The military eye of Soult could not fail to perceive the merit of such a commander, and at his suggestion, the decoration of the Legion of Honor was the reward conferred by Napoleon, of so brilliant an action. He was created, by special decree, Baron of the Empire. When the tide of war had changed, and the great Captain who had entered as a conqueror the capital of almost every continental power, was, in January, 1814, driven back upon his own, and in the presence of combined Europe was fighting for crown and life within sight of the towers of Notre Dame, and the triumphant arches of the Caroussel, he testified his confidence in General Chassé, by ordering him in that extremity to join him at once with his troops, in the vicinity of Paris. On the 27th February, with the remains of only four regiments, he attacked at *Bar sur Aube*, a corps of 6,000 Prussians, supported by a battery of six pieces, and after an obstinate and hotly contested action, in the course of which he was thrice charged by cavalry, and in which he himself was wounded, overthrew them. But the star of the conqueror had set, and the allied sovereigns entered Paris, with the profession of hostility only to the chief, and not to the people of France. With Napoleon fell the vast empire, which his arm alone could hold together, or wield in unity; and General Chassé, released from the banner under which he had so long and gloriously served, returned to his native country. Here the House of Orange had been reestablished with the full consent of the nation, and to its head the present king of the Netherlands, this soldier of many fields presented himself, and was welcomed by him with the confidence and distinction, to which his well earned laurels entitled him. He was received into the army of the Netherlands, with the rank of lieutenant-general, on the 21st April, 1814.

Europe now for a space seemed to breathe in peace—and the disorganization consequent upon years of war and suffering, and the fancied derangement of that blood bolstered illusion—the balance of power—were to be remedied by congresses of sovereigns and protocols of ministers. Diplomacy was now to bind anew those whom the sword had loosed, and with “Louis XVIII as a principle,”—for in that light alone the wily Talleyrand told the assembled despots in Paris, could he be presented to the French; that is, as representing the conquest of legitimacy over the revolution—the nations were parcelled or parcelling out among the heaven-born—when lo! a sound from an obscure town on the shores of the Mediterranean, reverberating in instant thunder throughout France and Europe, scattered at once congress, and sovereigns, and ministers; and Napoleon, the exile, stood again unquestioned sovereign in the palace of the Thuilleries. Faithful to his new duties and to his country, General Chassé prepared himself in the war that immediately ensued, to defend the menaced frontier of the Netherlands; and on the field of Waterloo he displayed anew the peculiar qualities, both as a soldier and a chief, which had marked so honorably his previous career. At a critical period of the battle, perceiving, at a moment when an English battery having exhausted its ammunition, had ceased firing, that it was menaced by an attack from the old imperial guard, and aware of the fatal consequences of such an attack if successful, he detached instantaneously his artillery under Major Van Smissen, to repulse at all hazards the advancing French columns. The manœuvre was gallantly performed, and the fire of the artillery was so well directed and murderous, that the assailants were compelled to fall back, leaving the declivity of *Mont St. Jean* covered with their wounded and their dead. This was the moment for the Bayonet-chief—his Dutch and Belgic corps was led to the charge, and soon completed the route which the artillery had prepared. This eminent and timely service was remarked by the Duke of Wellington, and publicly acknowledged by letter in the July following. The final overthrow of Napoleon, consequent upon this bloody day, again promised peace to the nations; and the sword of our warrior, which had been bared in so many climates and so many combats, was quietly rusting in its scabbard, when the revolution of the three days in Paris, which overturned at once and at a breath, as it were, the throne of a thousand years, and the more recent combinations of the Holy Allies,

stirred up anew all the elements of European discord, and Brussels soon had its three days. Placed, by this event, in a situation where he must choose between his fidelity to his colors and to his Dutch allegiance, and a cause that appealed to him in the name of liberty and popular rights, he decided with a soldier's honor to stand by his flag, and throwing himself into the citadel of Antwerp, in October, 1830, he declared his purpose to hold that post for Holland and the House of Orange to the last extremity. Neither menace, nor promises, nor entreaties, could shake his firm resolve; and all that could be extorted from him was, that if not attacked from the city, nor endangered in his position by the construction of any new works, or the repair of old ones, he would remain passive and await ulterior orders from the Hague. On the 27th October, however, some hostile movements against the citadel having occurred among the Belgian volunteers in Antwerp, General Chassé, with his wonted decision, commenced an immediate bombardment of the city, as well from the citadel as from the Dutch ships of war lying at anchor in the Scheldt. The cannonading lasted from four o'clock in the afternoon until eleven o'clock at night. Red hot balls and shells were fired, and a vast destruction of property, though with little loss of life, was occasioned by it. Among the buildings consumed was the Entrepôt, which was peculiarly exposed, from being situated between the citadel and the river. There was a great amount of foreign property deposited there, of which a large proportion belonged to our own countrymen, and for which it is believed a claim upon the king of Holland, or as he is still called, of the Netherlands, may be rightfully preferred. The judgment passed at the time of this occurrence, upon General Chassé, for thus assailing a comparatively defenceless town—for the citadel was originally constructed full as much to overawe and control the citizens, as to strengthen their means of resistance against external enemies—was generally unfavorable. His course was readily ascribed to Dutch jealousy of Antwerp, as the commercial rival of Amsterdam; and as the effervescence of popular movements against established authorities, had affected the leading presses of France and England, they willingly enough adopted a version of the affair, which tended to excite sympathy in favor of the revolted Belgians, and angry feelings against the Dutch. Looking, however, from this distance, at the conduct of General Chassé, as that of a trusted military commander, who under circum-

stances of great responsibility, was invested with the charge of an important fortress, for the preservation of which he was bound to take all proper means, it may perhaps be questioned whether he could have acted otherwise, without a sacrifice of reputation and duty. What are the circumstances? Secure of safety in his citadel, he had agreed to abstain from hostilities, provided none were directed against him. But on the 26th October, some citizens of Antwerp, aided by armed volunteers from Brussels, attacked the Dutch post in the great square of the city, composed of about 300 soldiers, killed the commander and many of his men, and scattered or made prisoners of the remainder. The city guard was present, and in no wise interfered to prevent this combat. Emboldened by their success, the volunteers and citizens attacked all the Dutch posts in the city, and made themselves masters of them in the course of the night of the 26th, though not without much bloodshed. The strife was renewed at daylight on the 27th, and successively all the gates of Antwerp held by Dutch troops, were captured, and the scattered remnants of these troops, pursued by the armed citizens, were chased into the citadel: then only did General Chassé retaliate—and at four o'clock in the afternoon of the 27th, nearly thirty-six hours after detachments from his garrison had been attacked at their posts in the city, was the first order given to fire upon the citizens and their town. That it was executed with vigor, if executed at all, was to be anticipated from the known character of the commander; but the moment a deputation from the town, pledging it to abstain from further hostilities, proceeded to the citadel, that moment the fire was discontinued. The game of war is one that cannot be played in kid gloves, and they, therefore, who enter into it, should count the cost beforehand. If, in the circumstances alluded to, General Chassé had suffered the volunteers and citizens of Antwerp, flushed with their partial success over detached parties, to proceed unchecked or unpunished, it will be conceded we think by all men, that he would have failed in duty to his king, and in that care and regard for his brother soldiers, massacred in the streets by superior numbers, for which in all his previous military career he had been remarkable. We conclude, therefore, that in firing upon the city, General Chassé was fully justified by the circumstances that led to it. Since that period, now more than two years ago, this veteran has quietly held his post—strengthening himself doubtless wherever he could, and pre-

paring himself for any event, which the future might have in reserve for him. What that event may be, is yet to be seen. Our last accounts left him beleaguered by a vastly superior force, led by skilful commanders, and intent upon reducing him, as soon as possible, to submission. Marshal Gerard, with an army of nearly 50,000 chosen French troops, encouraged by the presence of two of their king's sons, who work with them in the trenches, and who, though young, emulate the oldest soldier in their attention to, and discharge of, all military duties, is before the strong hold of General Chassé. To the summons to surrender it he has answered *No*—and the guns of his citadel, fired upon the assailants, bore witness to his apparent sincerity. It may nevertheless be that his secret orders are, not to defend himself to the uttermost, but, after such a show of resistance, as would prove that in giving up the fortress he yielded to actual force, to strike his flag and surrender; and the impunity with which the besiegers were permitted to make their first approaches, would seem to sanction some such idea. On the other hand, the language of his Order of the Day, issued on the first marching of the French army for Antwerp, indicates the most settled resolve to defend the fort to the last extremity. Here is that

“ORDER OF THE DAY.

“*To the Citadel of Antwerp, the Forts dependent upon it, and his Majesty's Navy in the Scheldt.*

“Brave brethren in arms! The moment when old Dutch courage and loyalty are to be put to a new test approaches. Within a few days a French army will appear before these ramparts, in order to compel us, if possible, by force of arms, to surrender this fortress and its dependent forts.

“Full of confidence in the justice of your cause, and relying upon your well tried courage and loyalty for your King and your Country, we shall intrepidly await this army.

“Brethren in arms! All Netherlands, and even Europe, have their eyes fixed upon you; let us, collectively and individually, prove that the confidence which our beloved King has reposed in us, has not been bestowed on the unworthy. And let us take the unalterable resolution to defend ourselves with manly courage to the last extremity.

“LIVE THE KING!

(Signed) “The General Commander-in-chief of the citadel of Antwerp, of its dependent Forts, and of his Majesty's Navy on the Scheldt,

“BARON CHASSÉ.

The appeal made to old Dutch courage and loyalty, will not be made in vain. The honors shewn by royal decree and popular enthusiasm to the memory of the gallant *Lieutenant Van Spyk*, who in the combat of October, 1830, of the citadel and fleet with the town of Antwerp, blew up himself and his vessel rather than surrender to the Belgians, are well calculated to quicken the ardor and confirm the resolution of those to whom the defence of the citadel is entrusted. The historical honors too, which in all ages and in all countries await the garrisons of besieged towns, who prefer every alternative of suffering, danger, and death, to the ignominious safety which submission might purchase, will all be remembered on this occasion; and the memorable answer of Palafox, from amidst the almost ruined battlements of the obstinately defended Saragossa—"war, war, to the knife"—will find an echo on this occasion in many a Dutch heart—and so it should be—so we hope it will be. There is a natural and honest instinct in the human breast, which prompts it to espouse the weaker cause. If Belgium had been left to settle her quarrel with Holland by the might of her own right arm, we could have looked unmoved upon the spectacle; but when she invokes or assents to the interposition of her mighty neighbors, France and England; and when an old, free, industrious, and peaceful people, like the Dutch, are summarily required to yield what they believe to be their rights, or to encounter the roused and united vengeance of the masters of the land and of the sea, we sympathize with, and are irresistibly led to put up our vows for, the gallantry and steadfast faith in a just cause, which dare encounter such fearful odds.

But the citadel of Antwerp must fall. However resolute and able the commander—however true, faithful, and brave the garrison—it is certain in the present advanced state of the art of war, that a place which can be approached, must eventually be reduced; and the precise number of hours almost and lives, which its reduction will cost, can be accurately estimated. The flag of Holland then, in any event, will be struck; but the past history of General Chassé, should he persist in the defence, can be little relied on for any thing, if it do not afford a pledge that it will only be amidst the ruins of his fortress, and the slaughtered bodies of its defenders, that the flag of his country will sink. Overwhelmed he may be—subdued never—and the noble soldier's career of half a century, could surely find no more glorious or honorable close, than amidst

the fallen bulwarks of the citadel, and while yet the banner of Holland flung defiance to its foes.

Victrix causa Deis placuit—sed victa Catoni.

THE ALBATROSS.

"Tis said the Albatross never rests.".....BUFFON.

Where the fathomless waves in magnificence toss,
Homeless and high soars the wild Albatross—
Unwearied, undaunted, unshrinking, alone,
The ocean, his empire—the tempest, his throne.

When the terrible whirlwind raves wild o'er the surge,
And the hurricane howls out the mariner's dirge,
In thy glory thou spurnest the dark-heaving sea,
Proud bird of the ocean-world—homeless and free.

When the winds are at rest, and the sun in his glow,
And the glittering tide sleeps in beauty below,
In the pride of thy power triumphant above
With thy mate thou art holding thy revels of love.

Untir'd, unfetter'd, unwatch'd, unconfin'd,
Be my spirit like thee in the world of the mind,
No leaning for earth e'er to weary its flight,
And fresh as thy pinion in regions of light.

ORCATIA.